

Message Text

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17

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SUBJECT: EXTRAORDINARY SESSION ON AGAIN; CABINET RESHUFFLE
DEBATE WARMS UP AGAIN

REF: BANGKOK 0166

SUMMARY: THE APPARENT DECISION TO INCLUDE THE SOCIAL AGRARIANS IN THE NEW CABINET AND THE DISTRIBUTION OF POSTS IN THE NEW CABINET IS UNDER ATTACK BY UNHAPPY MEMBERS OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT COALITION. AFTER INITIAL FUMBLE, OPPOSITION SUCCEEDED IN GATHERING SUFFICIENT SIGNATURES TO CALL FOR AN EXTRAORDINARY SESSION OF PARLIAMENT TO DEBATE A VOTE OF NO-CONFIDENCE IN THE GOVERNMENT. GOVERNMENT WAS ONE STEP AHEAD OF THEM, HAVING ALREADY REQUESTED AND RECEIVED ROYAL APPROVAL FOR AN EXTRAORDINARY SESSION TO BEGIN JANUARY 12. KHUKRIT WILL PROBABLY WIN ANY VOTES OF NO CONFIDENCE. END SUMMARY

1. AS WAS TO BE EXPECTED, THE INCLUSION OF SOCIAL AGRARIANS IN THE RESHUFFLED KHUKRIT CABINET (REFTEL) IS UNDER ATTACK BY
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UNITED PARTY MEMBERS UNHAPPY ABOUT THE DISTRIBUTION OF

POSTS AND THE PERSONS CHOSEN OR NOT CHOSEN TO FILL THEM. THE SECRETARY TO THE FOREIGN MINISTER, KON THAPPHARANGSI, TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER JANUARY 8 THAT THE SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY (SJP) MEMBERS WERE THE ONES MOST BITTERLY ATTACKING THE DISTRIBUTION AT A MEETING THIS MORNING. THE SJP HAS MADE NO SECRET SINCE THE COALITION WAS FIRST FORMED OF ITS VIEW THAT IT CONSIDERS ITSELF ENTITLED TO MORE POSTS IN THE CABINET. FURTHERMORE, FACTION LEADERS WITHIN THE PARTY, SUCH AS SUCHIN CHAOSIWIT AND CHUSIN KHONAN, ARE NO DOUBT UNHAPPY THAT THEY WERE NOT MENTIONED AS FILLING ANY OF THE POSTS IN THE NEW CABINET. SEVERAL GOVERNMENT MP'S HAVE TOLD THE EMBASSY POLITICAL ASSISTANT THAT, AS IN THE PAST, THE FINAL DECISION OF WHO GETS WHAT WILL BE MADE BY KHUKRIT, IMPLYING THAT THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE COALITION PERHAPS BEGRUDGINGLY WOULD GO ALONG WITH HIS DECISION.

2. THE CONFUSED SITUATION CONCERNING THE CONVENING OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SESSION TOOK A CURIOUS AND POSSIBLY FINAL TURN JAN. 8, ACCORDING TO INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIAT. THE OPPOSITION SUCCEEDED IN AMASSING MORE THAN THE MINIMUM 123 SIGNATURES NECESSARY TO REQUEST AN EXTRAORDINARY SESSION. THE CERTIFIED LIST WAS SENT TO THE HOUSE SPEAKER, PRASIT KANCHANAWAT, JAN. 8. HE IN TURN SENT IT TO THE KING FOR HIS APPROVAL THIS AFTERNOON. AMONG THOSE SIGNING THE REQUEST WERE SOME MEMBERS OF THE SOCIAL AGRARIAN, SOCIAL JUSTICE AND SOCIAL NATIONALIST PARTIES AS WELL AS SENATORS FROM VARIOUS PARTIES.

3. AFTER THE REQUEST HAD BEEN SENT TO THE KING, PRIDA PHATTHANATHABUT, MINISTER ATTACHED TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE, WENT TO THE SPEAKER ATTEMPTING TO HALT THE OPPOSITION PETITION. WHEN INFORMED THAT THE PETITION HAD ALREADY BEEN FORWARDED TO THE KING, PRIDA TOLD PRASIT THAT THE PETITION WAS INVALID BECAUSE THE GOVERNMENT HAD ALREADY REQUESTED THE CONVENING OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SESSION, WHICH THE KING HAD SIGNED JAN. 7. THE SESSION WOULD BEGIN ON JAN. 12 AND THE PROCLAMATION CALLING FOR THE CONVENING OF THE SESSION WOULD BE MADE CONFIDENTIAL

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EVENING OF JAN. 8. IT APPEARS THAT THE GOVERNMENT PLAYED A GAME OF ONE-UPSMANSHIP ON THE OPPOSITION AS WELL AS ON THE SPEAKER.

4. A MEMBER OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF THAILAND INDICATED TO AN EMBASSY OFFICER TODAY (JAN. 8) THAT THE PARTY HAS LITTLE CONFIDENCE THAT THE NO-CONFIDENCE ATTEMPT WOULD SUCCEED. SOCIAL ACTION MP'S TOLD THE EMBASSY

POLITICAL ASSISTANT THIS MORNING THAT THEY WERE NOT CONCERNED ABOUT THE OUTCOME OF THE NO-CONFIDENCE VOTE. ONE OF THEM SAID THAT WITH THE SETTLEMENT OF THE GENERAL STRIKE THERE IS NO HANDY TARGET TO WHICH THE OPPOSITION CAN EASILY PEG THE DEBATE.

5. COMMENT: WITH THE CONVENING OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SESSION KHUKRIT WILL PROBABLY DELAY THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE CABINET RESHUFFLE UNTIL AFTER THE SESSION IS OVER, HOLDING POSTS IN THE NEW CABINET AS INCENTIVES FOR SUPPORT OF THE GOVERNMENT, ALTHOUGH PRESS RUMORS INDICATE THAT THE DECISION HAS ALREADY BEEN MADE AND THE ANNOUNCEMENT WILL BE MADE THIS EVENING. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT KHUKRIT WILL WIN A FORTHCOMING VOTE OF CONFIDENCE.
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